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## BOAT SAFE AND SOBER Op-Ed Column

With hot weather right around the corner, there's no better place to spend a Michigan summer than on the water. But before you take to the waves for fun and adventure, please remember - boating and alcohol don't mix.

Alcohol was involved in 32 percent of all reported boating fatalities in the United States in 2004. That is a loss of life both tragic and preventable. U.S. Coast Guard statistics indicate that a boat operator with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) above .10 percent is 10 times more likely to be killed in a boating accident than a boater with no alcohol in their system.

Many boaters don't realize that alcohol can be even more hazardous on water than on land. As when driving a vehicle, alcohol impairs judgment, reaction time, balance, and vision. Out on the water, though, environmental factors such as sun, wind and motion can magnify the effects of alcohol and accelerate a drinker's impairment.

The misuse of alcohol is not only dangerous, it's illegal. Michigan law prohibits anyone from boating while under the influence of alcohol or drugs and provides stiff penalties. Boaters should know that by virtue of operating a boat on Michigan waters, they have consented to be tested for alcohol or drugs if arrested.

Boating fun starts with boating sober and boating smart. For more safety tips, please contact my office toll-free at (866) 305-2136 or by e-mail at <http://senate.mi.gov/stamas> for a free *Michigan Boating and Safety Guide*. For up-to-date information on Michigan boating regulations, visit [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr) to access the *Handbook of Michigan Boating Laws and Responsibilities*.

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